

has large and strong tarsi and a rather elongated bill, and appears to belong to a group which embraces *S. anthoides*, *S. humicola*, *S. orbignii*, and their allies. These birds have also twelve rectrices in their tail. For the former group the name *Leptasthenura* (proposed by Reichenbach for *S. ægithaloides*) may be used; the latter section does not seem to have yet had any generic name applied to it, unless it be possible to employ for it *Asthenes* of Reichenbach.

Besides the skin in my collection, I have only seen one other example of this species, which was received by Mr. Gould from Loxa in Ecuador along with other birds, and is now in the collection of Salvin and Godman.

9. Note on the Habits of *Myrmecocichla formicivora*, as observed near Windvogelberg, S. Africa. By G. E. BULGER, F.L.S., F.R.G.S., C.M.Z.S., &c.

The "Mocking-bird," so called (*Myrmecocichla formicivora*, Vieill.), is common about Windvogelberg\*; but I do not remember having seen it elsewhere at the Cape. Its plumage is of a very unpretending description, being much the colour of dark smoke, excepting a white patch on the wings, which shows very distinctly when it flies. On the 31st August, 1863, I saw several of them hopping about and chirping amongst the grass. One, mounted on the summit of an ant-heap, delighted me with a very sweet, though rather feeble, song, which I then heard for the first time. He jerked his tail violently up and down during the performance. Subsequently, on the 6th September, I heard my friend the "Mocking-bird" singing loudly a long continuous song, of which the principal part resembled the words "Peter-wee-wee-Peter." I had had no idea that his lungs were so powerful, his usual note being rather weak and inaudible, excepting at a short distance. I had been told by a brother officer that these birds formed their domiciles in holes in the large ant-heaps of the country; and on the 5th November a nest, containing the female and four young ones, was brought to me by one of the men of the detachment, who found it in a hole in the ground—a small hole, he said, into which he could scarcely get his hand, inside another larger one, one of the many kinds of burrow so common on the Cape flats. The nest was shallow, cup-shaped, and loosely made of grass. We put the whole concern into a large cage, and left it for a time—within sight, however, of where we were sitting. The old bird did not appear to be much frightened, though she sat perfectly still upon one of the perches of the cage, seemingly in great astonishment. Thinking that, perhaps, she *might* come back and feed her young, if I let her go, I opened the cage-door, and presently she hopped out on to the wall close by, and began to chirrup; she then flew away, and we saw no more of her. We

\* See, for list of other birds observed here, P. Z. S. 1866, p. 21.

were obliged to kill the young ones, as they would not eat. Whilst in the cage, the old bird whistled, every now and then, its clear, peculiar call-note.

I have often seen these birds poised in the air, almost stationary, with their wings quivering rapidly, after the manner of some Kingfishers, for perhaps a minute or two at a time, after which they would shoot down suddenly to the earth, and bear off in triumph the victim of these operations, which, I imagine, must have been some insect. A friend of mine saw one of them engaged in devouring a large beetle; so that the story of their living exclusively on ants cannot be true. They are, apparently, inquisitive birds; for whenever I approached one of them, he stretched out his neck, and, figuratively speaking, stood on his "tip-toes" to have a better look at me. I found them exceedingly tenacious of life, requiring a deal of killing for so small a bird. The origin of the sobriquet "Mocking-bird," which, I believe, is shared by some others of the Saxicolinæ, I have been unable to discover. I have never heard any mimicry in its notes, though it will readily answer if whistled to.

#### 10. On the Species of *Hyrax* inhabiting Abyssinia and the Neighbouring Countries. By WILLIAM T. BLANFORD, C.M.Z.S.

During the last two years Dr. Gray has described, from specimens in the British Museum, four new species of *Hyrax* from Abyssinia. Two of these, *H. Brucei* and *H. alpini*, were described in 1867, before the Abyssinian expedition (Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. ser. 4. vol. i. pp. 44, 45); and two other species, one belonging to each of the proposed genera *Euhyrax* and *Dendrohyrax*, were also shown to have been brought from southern Abyssinia.

My attention was thus drawn to the subject of the Abyssinian *Hyraxes* just when starting for the expedition. During the time spent in Abyssinia, I had many opportunities of collecting and observing these animals; and the first few specimens obtained exhibited such an unusual amount of variation, that I endeavoured to procure as large a series as I could. I collected altogether twenty-eight specimens from various localities, about twenty of which are now in the British Museum; and these enable me, I think, to throw some light upon the specific characters. Since returning from Abyssinia I have had opportunities of examining both Dr. Gray's types in the British Museum and the specimens now in the Berlin Museum described by Hemprich and Ehrenberg in the 'Symbolæ Physicæ.' Meantime Dr. Gray had described as new *H. ferrugineus* and *H. irrorata*, with a variety named *luteogaster* considered to be probably also distinct, from specimens brought from Abyssinia by my friend Mr. Jesse.

Of the specimens obtained by me, one was shot on the shores of Annesley Bay; three in the passes leading to the highlands, at heights of 2000 to 4000 feet above the sea; two at Senafé, 8000 feet; a series